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ABSTRACT

High school teachers can contribute greatly to reading instruction by helping students apply to specific content those reading skills learned in earlier years, by strengthening students' basic skills, and by teaching the special reading skills peculiar to a subject area. Vocational education teachers confront many secondary students who show interest and potential in vocational areas but who have not attained reading levels high enough to succeed. Through a well-devised plan, a vocational education teacher can focus on content and at the same time strengthen abilities in word recognition, vocabulary meaning, comprehension, and study skills. Such a plan should include: (1) background and motivation for reading, (2) study of difficult vocabulary terms, (3) purpose for reading material, (4) reading the selection, (5) discussion, and (6) application and extension of skills. Other supplementary kinds of reading assistance are the SQ3R procedure (survey, question, read, recite, and review) and the process and content guides described by R. Karlin in "Teaching Reading in High School." (AEA)

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TEACHING READING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Introduction

During the past decade, there has been a growing demand for extension of the reading program from the elementary into the secondary school. For many high school students, skills learned in earlier years are not sufficient for reading materials that become increasingly more complex in higher grades. Reading instruction must not cease after the elementary school years but should be given emphasis in every high school subject. It is impossible for the elementary schools to provide all the help in reading that will be needed by students in later years.

High school teachers can contribute greatly to reading instruction. Although their primary concern may be the teaching of content, they can teach reading at the same time. This does not mean that each secondary teacher should teach a course in developmental reading as the elementary teacher does. It means, however, that the secondary teacher can help his students apply reading skills learned in earlier years to a content area, he can aid them in strengthening their basic skills, and he can teach the special reading skills peculiar to a subject area. Secondary teachers can share in making reading a developmental process through the high school years.

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Due to the recognized need for teaching reading in secondary school subject areas, there is a growing demand for every teacher to be "a teacher of reading" and for the secondary teacher to have training in the teaching of reading as a requirement for state certification.

Reading Problems in Vocational Areas

Vocational education teachers report that many of their students cannot read well enough to benefit from textbooks and other materials, and that for many students word recognition techniques are weak, comprehension is poor, study skills are deficient, and failure on written class exercises and examinations is prevalent. Many secondary students who show interest and potential in vocational areas have not attained reading levels high enough to succeed. They must receive guidance in reading in their chosen areas of vocational interest. Instruction in reading within a specialized area can benefit both the reading skill of a student and his capability in the specialization.

In addition to teaching reading skills in the subject areas, it is necessary that consideration be given to the students' individual reading abilities and to the readability of textbooks, job sheets, and other printed materials such as technical manuals and manufacturers' instructions. If students are to succeed in reading, the content must be written at a level which permits fluency and success and yet challenges the reader without discouraging him. Skillful teaching in each step of a lesson will not

remedy the problems of a student trying to read at a frustration level. For problem readers, an instructional level of 95% accuracy in word recognition (no more than one error in twenty running words) and at least 75% comprehension is essential. This may necessitate rewriting difficult material at a lower level for some students by using easier vocabulary and shorter sentences.

Reading Instruction in Vocational Education

The integration of basic reading skills with the teaching of content can be approached through a definitely organized lesson plan which emphasizes both developmental reading and subject matter. Through a well-devised plan, a vocational education teacher can focus on content and at the same time strengthen ability in word recognition, vocabulary meaning, comprehension, and study skills.

The Lesson Plan

There are various kinds of lesson plans; however, a well-planned lesson for the purposes which have been delineated should include the following parts:

1. Background and motivation for reading
2. Study of difficult vocabulary terms
3. Purpose for reading the material
4. Reading the selection

5. Discussion

6. Application and extension of skills

Background for reading The first step of a well-planned lesson should prepare students for reading. A discussion permitting them to relate what they know about a subject is a motivating factor in establishing readiness and it can help the teacher determine the extent of the students' knowledge. As students and teacher share information, group interaction can raise interest level and enhance understanding. Following a time of sharing what the students may know about a topic, the teacher should further prepare them by telling something of what is in the content to be read. Various kinds of visual aids including diagrams, charts, and models may be used.

Vocabulary study Teaching of both specialized and common vocabulary is a major responsibility of the vocational education teacher. Words and phrases that offer difficulty in pronunciation and/or meaning should be presented before students read a selection. An explanation of symbols, abbreviations, and names of tools may be included. This kind of study makes reading less difficult and it facilitates meaning and rate. Vocabulary terms should be presented on the chalkboard in sentences or phrases pertaining to the textual content and should be underlined for visual emphasis. When discussing these terms, tools may be used for demonstration and labelled parts of equipment may be identified. Labelling, classroom flipcharts, and wall charts are all valuable aids in vocabulary development.

Help should be given in word recognition when terms are difficult to pronounce. This may involve use of context clues; structural analysis including recognition of root words, prefixes, suffixes, parts of compound words, syllabication, and accent; identification of helpful phonic elements; use of diacritical marks; phonetic respelling; and dictionary aids.

In this study of vocabulary, difficult concepts, too, should be explained. If a teacher finds a large number of unfamiliar words and concepts, the reading material is too difficult and should be of lower level.

Establishing purpose For better comprehension, a reader needs definite purpose for reading. Telling students to read a number of pages gives no guidance. It is possible to set purpose in different ways; however, this is usually done by formulating questions for the reader to think about. For emphasis and clarity, these questions should be written on the chalkboard or mimeographed and explained before the assignment is read. Students may share in setting purpose by questioning as the stage is set for reading the material. These questions can be added to the ones formulated by the teacher. Questions for purpose should pertain to important parts of the content to be discussed and retained. Since much of the material in vocational education is technical and factual and is comprised of specific directions and explanations which may be complex, purpose should be set specifically and with clarity. In establishing purpose, the teacher may wish to elicit information such as main ideas, details, sequence, directions, interrelationships, and the interpretation of charts or diagrams in the assignment.

Reading a selection Following the establishment of purpose, students who are independent readers should read the material silently. Upon finishing the reading, the teacher may choose to have them work further on the purpose questions, exercises, or other assigned activities.

For problem readers who are unable to read a text assignment or job sheet without help, the teacher may use a guided silent and oral reading procedure while the able readers are reading and working independently. In this carefully guided reading period, the problem readers read through the content section by section. Material written at an easy level will be needed for these students. Following is the step-by-step method:

1. The teacher poses a guide question for students to think about as they read a section of content. (Example: "Read the first three paragraphs to find----------.")

2. Students read the section silently with the teacher giving necessary help.

3. Following the silent reading, the section is discussed with the guide question being answered in the discussion.

4. After discussion, students read aloud parts from the section as directed by the teacher or the entire section may be read orally. During the oral reading, help is given in word recognition. Words that give difficulty should be used as review words before starting the next day's lesson and may be used for a wall chart.

This procedure, Steps 1-4, is followed through the content section by section and is very valuable for the poor readers. In addition to the guided reading, extra help can be provided by recording textbook material and job sheet instructions on tape. Students can then follow written text as they listen.

Discussing the lesson After reading a selection, all students are brought together for a discussion. Attention is given to the purpose questions which were set up before reading. Peer-group interaction, guided by the teacher, should lead to thorough consideration of the material read. The discussion may be interspersed with oral reading to prove a point, to clarify an issue, or to describe a particular procedure. Discussion of the lesson during the demonstration of equipment can be very effective.

Application The form that application will take depends on the nature of the content and the aim of the lesson. Students must be able to apply what has been read to various situations. When working with poor readers, teachers may wish to have job sheets read aloud for the entire class as demonstrations are given and applications are made. Able students may be directed to additional reading in technical magazines and journals. Further work with exercises pertaining to vocabulary and comprehension may be used.

Other Kinds of Reading Assistance

Some helps that may be used to supplement the lesson plan described in this article are the SQ3R procedure, the process study guide, and the content study guide.

If the teacher wishes, a five-step plan known as SQ3R can be built into a lesson as an aid in independent study of the textbook. After setting purpose, ask the students to:

1. Survey the chapter or content by noting the title, introductory parts, headings, subheadings, concluding statements, and illustrations.
2. Question by formulating the headings and subheadings into questions. This procedure establishes additional purpose for reading topic by topic.
3. Read to answer the questions.
4. Recite the answers gained from the reading. Topic by topic the reader questions, reads, and recites to himself.
5. Review the entire chapter. The reading may be extended into reference materials to gain more knowledge of the subject.

One kind of study aid, the process guide as described by Karlin,[1] focuses attention of the reader on particular reading skills. This aid suggests ways of reading to acquire information and it may be used as an additional help in coping with difficulties after purpose is established. Such guides are prepared on strips of paper, duplicated, and lined up with the text in the page margins. Sometimes questions are printed on these strips and in addition there may be reminders to note main ideas, details, sequence, specific directions, or context clues. Help can be given in pronunciation of difficult words including use of syllabication, phonetic respelling, diacritical marks, and accent.

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[1]Robert Karlin, Teaching Reading in High School, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1972), pp. 307-09.

The second kind of study aid, the content guide, helps the reader gain information from what he reads.[2] Detailed purposes may be established for independent reading through this kind of guidance. This aid may consist of a list of questions, matching exercises, completion exercises, or true-false items. It suggests to students important points to be retained from the assigned reading.

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[2]Ibid., pp. 309-310.